Akbar Shahid Ahmed: Okay, good morning, everybody. Right here at the start, let's talk about diversity and National Security, so I would be remiss if I didn't begin by saying, "Happy Pride." Hello.

This is a hugely important conversation, as I know you all know. And before I introduce our amazing panel, I want to set the stakes of what we're talking about and why we're talking about it now. President Joe Biden entered office recognizing that the national security institutions were extremely demoralized and had long-standing issues with diversity. He issued a memo on revitalizing the International Security Workforce with a focus on diversity. He's mentioned diversity in the National Security strategy. President Biden says it's time for the State Department to stop being a "failed male and Yale." He says, "God decided 75 years ago, let's talk about extremism in the ranks." However, there's been some discontent, and there's been some pushback. In my own reporting, I had one political appointee, for instance, tell me "We were simply political props in this administration." So, what does it mean to have a genuine conversation about diversity? And then, let's think about this externally. America's role in the world depends on being a coherent, multi-racial democracy. Right now, we're not seeing that voice. We look at questions of Ukraine Aid. You saw today the news from Brazil, pushing back yet again on Ukraine Aid. How can America's diversity be used to advance its foreign policy priorities, explain why Washington is doing what it's doing, and have an actually effective strategy?

So, in our panel today, I'm hoping we can talk about what's the good work being done on diversity and National Security, and what needs to change. What does it mean to see historic firsts like Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the first black secretary of defense? DNI Haynes, so many others in this administration. But what it means to go not just at that higher level, but at
the levels below to build the pipeline, to have meaningful access. I have an amazing panel. We've got Nola Haynes, a Truman National Security Project Fellow, a professor at Georgetown School of Foreign Service. We've got the honorable Gil Cisneros, the Under Secretary of Personnel Management at the Defense Department. And we've got Dr. Alissa Ayers, the Dean of George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. Thank you all for being here with me today, and thank you all for being here for this conversation. I hope you're hydrated and caffeinated and ready to ask a lot of questions.

I'll start with you, Under Secretary Cisneros Nola Haynes, if we could. Can you give us a bit of the administration perspective about the work you're doing at the Pentagon and beyond? We've seen a lot of conversations about the "woke military," which raises the question of what, in the military, was asleep. But more importantly, what is this narrative, and how are you and the Pentagon answering it, responding to it, and saying, "Actually, diversity is a strength for the fighting force"?

**Gilbert Cisneros:** Well, I serve as a Personnel Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel Readiness, and also the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the Department of Defense. You know, there are a lot of people that are pushing that narrative. I refuse to use that word, but to me, I just ignore it. We push forward with diversity at the Department of Defense. We see it as a strength. We know inclusion is important. We are integrating and making our forces more diverse. We see that it's necessary. When it comes to, like you said, talking about the President's executive orders, we've taken it to different levels and we've gone out and done more I think than has ever been done before from this department not only are we trying to put a focus on what we're doing with inside the department but also how are we interacting with communities outside of our installations um you know I kind of refer to it as our Good Neighbor policy right making sure that we are supporting women-owned and minority-owned businesses uh we uh the the Secretary of Defense has been uh wonderful at putting an emphasis on making sure that we are um you know that when he looks at the promotions for our general and and Admirals uh they're not coming to him with just names they're coming to them with a diverse slate of candidates and he's done a good job of promoting those individuals there's still a lot of work to be done uh don't get me wrong there we still have a lot of things to do we still need to do a better job at growing our bench making sure that we are putting an emphasis in making sure that we're getting people in the right career Fields so that can be part of that bench kind of moving forward and can eventually become those senior Executives whether they're in the civilian field or are becoming more of those um our Gophers our general officers and flag officers but diversity is a strength and we will keep pursuing that Avenue it has done wonders in the business community and we know it's going to do wonders for us as well.

**Akbar Shahid Ahmed:** And can I ask what barometers the administration is using to measure itself right so we've seen some criticism come out there was a CNN report recently suggesting
that you know fear of wokism had forced the Pentagon to change its approach to combating extremism um there's been a pentagon IG report saying the Congressional Commission on diversity at the Pentagon just had only implemented six of its 18 recommendations where does the administration think it stands I mean do you think there's Justified criticism we've seen it even from folks in the Truman Community, Christopher Goldsmith who's on our next panel said quote the pen clone has been completely ineffective on extremism and it's no different from two years ago so how do you respond to those criticisms that scrutiny? 

**Gilbert Cisneros:** you know I read that scene in an article and when I when I first read it I thought this is completely false because it's not true we are going out and we are combat in extremism we have put out a uh a Dodie on combating extremism that talks about extremist groups as well as gang activities uh We've we've changed the forms that we use we're working closer with law enforcement to ensure that when somebody comes in what tattoos do they have that maybe forms of gang or are extremist groups so we are we are doing more and again there's still more to be done that needs to be done and and we're doing that our our intelligence and uh and security uh component our ins is is working hard to make sure that they're updating things but um you know that that article kind of gave the impression that we were just sitting on hands that we're not doing anything and nothing can be further from the truth we have an extremist group task force that that just met recently um and they're going to continue to meet

**Akbar Shahid Ahmed:** thank you and I'd love to go inside a bit more in a in our discussion I'll move on you know it's a point of questions to you Dr hands um who has flown in from sunny California where everyone as you can tell dresses so much better than all of us yeah uh so she's here to shame us and educate us um Dr Haynes what I love about your perspective as a national security practitioner is that you're beyond the Beltway right and I know Truman has a big focus on talking about how that's a big contribution so can you talk about how you bring that in into your work and also how DC narratives hit different in other places right I'm thinking about China being a huge trading partner for California how does DC's hawkishness translate there or if you're talking to communities that have been historically underserved let's talk about people of color in this country and you're saying we're sending billions in Aid abroad how do you explain that how do you you know connect that way I'm going to start with the first of those four questions

**Nola Haynes:** So yes um California is a very interesting space because we have a lot of National Security structure there. We have the academic institutions, we have Labs, we have think tanks, we have an infrastructure and unfortunately a lot of people especially from communities of color and this is something I care a great deal about are not plugged into that structure and that's something that I'm a huge advocate of because I think there's so many exciting careers inside of National Security and foreign policy and people just don't know about them. So that that's one part of it and one of the things that's really important from a West Coast
perspective perspective is obviously climate security and not just climate Security in the way that California is innovating in clean energy Tech, Quantum AI, but in terms of foreign policy when you think about the smaller Pacific island States. Who are really suffering from climate insecurities. And then we also think about the relationship with China and then we also think about the relationship with Taiwan. So we have a whole security system that is on the Pacific coast that sometimes we feel like we're not being heard as much because we're not in a Beltway. And like I said you know there are communities like Pacific Council, there's Rand nothing compared to all the think tanks in here in DC but we are doing very important work and from my perspective, as an academic who works on traditional and emerging threats one of the things that's really important to me is say for instance with China. While we are definitely in a tense situation with China. One thing that's important to me is a lot of my colleagues who may be a Chinese descent I want to make sure that they feel safe, too that they aren't being seen in a negative light, which tends to happen historically when we think about what happened after 9 11, when we think about what happened with all the Arab and Muslim communities and in our country, unfortunately, we have of you know that that kind of branding people because of their identities. So it's a very complicated Nexus of security. We have human security. We have climate security. We have foreign policies so it's this beautiful kind of um Nexus of security concerns that I bring with me from beautiful sunny California

**Akbar Shahid Ahmed:** I'll ask you for the academic perspective um how you think Scholars and Scholar practitioners I know you've previously said in the state department are adapting to have a more diverse more inclusive conversation and kind of what you're hearing from your students um I know you know 300 factories of GW Almas well what you're hearing what they want where they want to go and if you have specifics that would be great you know whether it's not curricula sub-national diplomacy any of that that Elliot is working on.

**Alyssa Ayres:** We had spoken earlier and I made sure to bring some specific examples because I wanted to do full Justice to the question first I'm thrilled to be here and be part of this panel and to bring a kind of uh perspective of how we think about educating our Rising leaders who will go out and be employed in many different components of the international Affairs space I do want to Echo what Jenna Ben Yehuda LED with in our opening remarks that we at the Elliott School see the question of National Security in the same way as the Truman Center we are a School of International Affairs we have six disciplines represented among our faculty and then some so we're not specifically and only focused on international relations we also have comparative politics we have history we have economics we have geography we have anthropology we have public policy so this is a pretty broad look at what it means to do the practice of international affairs there's kind of three ways of thinking about curriculum and what you can bring to questions of curriculum and diversity and and we certainly think diversity is an important component of this at the level of our our faculty faculty develop their
individual syllabi and I can say certainly our faculty have been seized with the question of responding to the great changes that are taking place in the world and making sure that the individual courses they're offering are creating different opportunities for perspectives and viewpoints for our students in the classes so just to give you a few examples our faculty are bringing in new and diverse readings and guest speakers in courses focused on the Middle East of course with the pandemic and the routinization of virtual engagement it's really much easier to bring in a guest speaker for your class provided that you get the time zone aligned it was a lot harder 15 years ago when you would have had to bring somebody in we've got faculty who are intentionally adding voices and perspectives from minorities in China for courses that are focused on East Asia faculty who are including work on disability rights in what they're teaching faculty who have courses on Democratic erosion including a section on race and democracy questions of the ethics of foreign assistance and including in that course consideration of race and gender and geopolitical hierarchies or or Scholars who are working on nationalisms who include a focus on nationalism and racing I could go on and on but I think that gives you a sense of disciplinary diversity in the way that many of our faculty are saying hey there are we need a broadening of perspectives to equip our students to be great practitioners in the world that they're graduating into I also wanted to note that that when we think about curriculum at the level of a program at the level of a degree we're always thinking about what goes into the component courses that go into a degree program every five years or so we take a look and revise what we're doing last year I asked a group of our wonderful faculty from across 10 different disciplines to convene as a special committee on the curriculum and develop some thoughts on what we would include if we were developing an international Affairs curriculum not building on what we already had but kind of Blue Sky Thinking for the 21st century and they put together a really thoughtful report I won't go into all the details but three of the important elements of their findings were that the world today is marked by having to think really closely about the question of being U.S focused versus internationally focused having to think about diversity in all of its facets and having to think about the interconnections around the world and thinking about the ways that we have those principles percolate out throughout our different degree programs so that's kind of high level the third thing I wanted to just make sure to raise and we could come back to this in more detail is that there really is a great democratization taking place when we think about foreign policy in the world it's foreign policy is not the purview of you know the striped pant set or whatever right some perspective of a very narrow group it actually affects affects all of us and it's I think that became very very clear in a kind of uh everyday newspaper coffee table breakfast way with the pandemic because we saw how something that happens in one place affects the entire world very rapidly we saw the knock-on effects with supply chain Economic Security um with with Russia's invasion of Ukraine we saw the use of economic sanctions as an important Leading Edge tool in foreign policy and what that does for things around for our Economic Security so with those examples we see now how States counties cities have important stakes in foreign policy and National Security and we are now thinking active we're actively brainstorming as a school about how we can be responsive to that question I'd be happy to go into more detail but one of the things we're thinking about is how we can develop
a credential not a full degree program but maybe something that gives people who are becoming International Affairs practitioners access to some training that speaks to what they're doing at the state or county or city level because this is where we're seeing a great expansion of international Affairs engagement so there's a few examples but happy to go into more.

**Akbar Shahid Ahmed:** Well I love that because I think I love that because I think it links to something coming up from all of you which is there's clearly a perception and a reality right of exclusion from this National Security and foreign policy conversation and I wondered if as a group you could talk a bit about what the barriers entry that remain are to having that truly inclusive space so right so whether it's talking about elevating the sub-national level talking about engaging with communities around military installations so that they feel a buy-in right like what does it mean to have this giant American base and what are these people going to do abroad um talking about just cases outside the Beltway and communities that have not been thinking about this how are you all thinking about you know three to five years what are the top things you think need to be addressed to have that more genuine diverse conversation in our pre you know prep talks some interesting stuff came up around just basic things right things that we that are not highfalutin that are not in textbooks but things that are as basic as do you know anyone in Washington DC do you have the money to travel here right what and you come here can you get a security clearance to get a job right what does that mean I'm an immigrant you know if you're someone with foreign contacts with family abroad with you know a mold that's different so how are you all thinking from your different Vantage points and I'll let any of you take this on um you can kind of build on it.

**Nola Haynes:** I'll jump in so during COVID we had this opportunity to fellowship and meet with people that we would have never been able to in person because you were able to congregate together from people from many different walks of life many different agencies and so I was part of a National Security kind of collective with a lot of uh people of color and one of the things that my friends in the international uh I mean in the intelligence Community would constantly say is the barrier to entry around security clearances and that is a very intense process it can be a stressful anxiety type of process and one of the things that a lot of the males brought up was this idea that what if you made a mistake when you were younger and that mistake follows you and depending on which agency you enter there is a lie detector component to it and that really Stokes fear in people that they maybe don't pass it not because they've done something nefarious is just this kind of relationship this tension that exists so the security clearance issue um is a is a really big barrier to entry from certain from from people from certain communities of color and I don't know what the answer is but I will say it is a conversation that's being had especially in the intelligence community and you know I've I've I've lived my life in a very particular way and I got to tell you that's a stressful process you know and um and so when people find out depending on what you do in this space that you have to go through that process they may not be as attracted to to do the work so it it's it's a very interesting relationship with the security part of it all um and so like I said I don't have any uh answers to it but it's a it's a conversation it's being had.
Gilbert Cisneros: I will say at the Department of Defense and this is again I think I think we got to do better right we got to do a better job at educating people what opportunities you know the Department of Defense the U.S military can provide um I was 18 years old I joined the United States Navy because I knew I wanted to do something I just wasn't really sure what um and the opportunity that it gave me really changed my life you know I have three degrees all because of my military service it really created an opportunity to go out there and to do something different and we got to do a better job at telling that type of story we have a lot of individuals out there who have joined the military and really have have prospered like I did and it prevented or I mean not prevented them but it gave them an opportunity to go into this National Security space where they could do things and really kind of improve their lives and we got to do a better job at communicating that message into communities of color underserved communities because you know a lot of them think when I talk to young kids and I talk to a young man who's uh you know the son of a good friend of mine well hey you know you should did you ever think about joining the military and he's ah you know I I just I don't want to get hurt you know everybody thinks you're joining we're going to hand you an M16 and that's going to be you know what we're going to have you do but there are so many things that you can do within the military around intelligence you know cyber security and space and you know languages and all these fields that are so important to the mission that we have and we need uh diverse people in these fields like our under secretary Ron Moultrie who's uh he's under Secretary of ins intelligence and security you know he wants those bilingual individuals because you know his thing is we already know too we can teach you another one it makes it a lot easier because you already understand language so we've got to do a better job and we're working on that to communicate the messages of what benefits the military can give to give people in to bring them in through the military and to National Security.

Alyssa Ayres: Higher ed perspective certainly I I think it would be not news to anyone here that one of the big barriers to access in higher ed is tuition for our undergraduates the George Washington University has made a very significant commitment we are on a pathway to be able to full need to all Pell eligible students I Believe by 2027 so we're phasing that in but it's a very significant financial commitment from the University we are actively actively raising funds to provide endowed scholarships for our undergraduates we are always raising funds to provide additional Fellowship support for our graduate students so we can help make that amazing education available to more people that certainly is a high priority another area that is always a challenge and one that's really important for us and we do focus a lot about on this is helping students have access to the networks that will shape their opportunities so we pride ourselves in the fact that we help our students land great internships undergraduates as well as graduate students those internships can be the pathway to a job opportunity they can also importantly be the pathway to identifying something that somebody doesn't want to do so they can find that next Direction but we care a lot about that we began raising funds about a
year ago for an Elliott Equity Fund to be supportive of opportunities for students so not only on a tuition basis but on a non-tuition basis if there are internships that aren't unpaid can we help fill the Gap so somebody doesn't be put in a position having to forego an important career shaping opportunity because of need so those are a few examples but certainly we care a lot about access to the education we'll continue to keep working on that and to providing those Pathways for the networking opportunities that will be so important for all of our students.

Akbar Shahid Ahmed: Thank you I so we're talking we've talked a bit about getting into that National Security space and I wondered if we could shift then to questions of retention like where along the pipeline are people especially people from historically marginalized groups dropping out just saying you know I am a square bag in a round hole this institution was not built for me or people look like me and where can we be doing a better job you know in my own reporting I found that at the state department for instance there's still huge issues with reporting um mistreatment harassment a recent survey at the state department founder 44 of State Department employees had experienced discrimination harassment and bullying and most of them had not reported it because they felt nothing's going to happen so I I wonder how you're thinking about retention and in your own experiences where you've seen people say you know what I'm trying I've been given the opportunities I know I come from a historically marginalized place I have a different perspective but it's just too much you know 10 years 15 years in I don't see a future for myself promotions are going to be hard um how are you thinking about keeping people in the space and elevating them.

Gilbert Cisneros: uh you know I'll say right now A retention the United States military is at an all-time high you know I think once we get people in there uh they know the the job that they're doing what the mission's all about um they want to stay um you know we're working hard to ensure that we are taking care of our people uh that is something that secretary Austin has put a tremendous focus on and we are working to ensure that we're not only taking care of our service members but their families as well and we'll continue to do that because we know what's important right there is a saying the military is um you know you recruit the individual but you retain the family and so that's something that we will again we're going to continue to work in that and focus on that you know around our civilian employees that we have um you know I think it is about kind of bringing in and we want Talent at the Department of Defense I want people to think of us as an employer of choice and I know going to USA jobs and applying for some of those jobs can be tedious and it can take a long time and we're we're working with the OPM to kind of see how we can streamline that process and make it better and get the the security check you know done a little bit faster than it's been done in the in the past but um you know we want to bring you in right we want to give you people opportunity and I think that's what it's really about is giving you an opportunity to get in there and succeed and show us what you can do um you know and I think when that happens and we've had a number of individuals that do that have gone on to move to other things and take higher positions that have been people of color that have been women and so we want to bring new people in to do that and continue to and I think that's something that I take very
seriously and I know the other people that I work with at the department is is how can we nurture those under us and kind of raise them up so they can go on and do other things

**Nola Haynes:** This is a very important question because we get to talk about that word that's becoming that term that's becoming a little dirty, DEIA, and big scary term. But what's important to remember in higher education, also in a lot of the different agencies, the diversity part, the recruitment part, is only one part of it. The representation part is one part of it. What does the inclusivity part look like? What does the equity part look like? Is that culture open to change? And that's what we're talking about here, right? So, talking to a lot of colleagues from higher education to State Defense, whatever, I see this has been the constant theme. It's about culture. And I think that some of the policies that say, "We're diversity, diversity, diversity," some people who have already traditionally been in these spaces feel like it's being forced upon them. And I think that's something to keep in mind and to consider. And then other folks who look like me, who are in some of these spaces and positions, we feel like we're the show pony, right? And so what do you do to try and bridge that gap? How do you do that? And that's where the answer lies. It's somewhere in the middle of the representation and the traditional cultures. And what do we do to bridge that? And I'm a big believer in inclusivity. I think that once we understand that a lot of this works better if we're all engaged in the National Security project, if all of the agencies, all of the higher ed institutions actually looked like the country, looked like the rest of the world, I think that we are in a far stronger position. So I really do believe in DEIA, and not just because it's about quotas or anything like that. No, it's important because it's going to take all of us to get the job done. It's going to take all of us to make sure that we maintain this democracy that really is on the brink. And so all of these different things matter, and inclusivity, I cannot say it enough, and equity is how we get there.

**Akbar Shahid Ahmed:** Like to your point I will just quote from the National Security strategy where they say, quote, "We are prioritizing DEIA," they use, you know, the scary term to ensure national security institutions reflect the American public that they represent. And I loved your point about the resistance to change and how we call that what it is and acknowledge that it exists because these moments have existed before, right? That there have been efforts to create diversity in the National Security establishment dating back to the '50s. It was a Cold War imperative then, it was a Kennedy imperative, etc., etc. We've seen this happen. And then we've seen people inside the bureaucracy say, "No, wait, stop." And often these are people with positions of power. So I'm wondering if we can talk about why this moment is different and maybe connect that all to just everyone's personal experiences in this National Security space. Like, we are sitting here on a stage where we are not pale, male, and Yale. Sorry. How have you all navigated the space? And do you think this is a really different moment for diversity and National Security than the conversations we've had before that clearly did not fully deliver?

**Gilbert Cisneros:** I can go first on this one. At the Department of Defense, I think it's we've known that DEIA is very important, and it's something that needs to be integrated into the
national defense strategy, and it is. And we are trying to change the culture there and working around it. And the thing that we're doing right is that when we started our 2040 task force, we've made DEIA not just the Personnel Readiness problem, but it is, well, I shouldn't say a problem, but we've made DEIA a Department of Defense issue. There's something that the whole entire department needs to play a role in changing the culture and ensuring that we are providing that diversity and that equity and inclusion to all the personnel that are there to create that opportunity. A guy like myself had, and really, that is the change that we have gone and what we've done differently and what we've been able to do. And I think President Biden has gone and supported and with his executive orders. And this is something that I will say too, it didn't just start with President Biden. The last administration, Secretary Esper, actually did a study and started moving towards doing some of these DEIA initiatives because he knew how important it was. They saw the research and shown how important it was and how diverse teams drive better results. There is a Marine Corps study that the Marine Corps did that said when teams are integrated with at least one woman, they perform better than if it's just all male. And so this is why we've seen it and why we've kind of taken this initiative to say, like, okay, we're not doing diversity for diversity's sake. We're not doing inclusion for inclusion's sake. It's got to be an integral part of our strategy, and it's going to make us better. And we know diverse teams are better teams, and that's what's driving us towards the future.

**Akbar Shahid Ahmed:** And I love that you mentioned this is a bipartisan priority. This has been historically. It is not just been a democratic issue.

**Alyssa Ayres:** I wanted to jump in on that and just, first, I want to give great credit to my predecessor at the Elliott School, Ambassador Ruben Brigety, who came into the role in 2015 and really established what I think is a wonderful and leading-edge program focused on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion for the way we think about an international affairs education. We have an assistant dean position, an assistant dean for student services, diversity, equity, and inclusion. I think she is here today, Dr. Lakeisha Harrison. Here she is. Thank you. Please feel free to introduce yourselves to Dr. Harrison if you have a chance. But this illustrates the priority that we place on the DEI mission for a higher education institution. I'd also say that what is as important, at the same time, as our country becomes more and more diverse, the world and the shifting that the world is becoming more multipolar. So we need to prepare our students for a world in which they have to know a lot about a lot of things to be fluent in an international affairs career and in an international affairs practitioner arena.

**Akbar Shahid Ahmed:** And I wonder if we can, on that point, not just the world changing, American influence shifting, right? America's approach vis-a-vis other nations just needing to be maybe a little less dominant or a little more inclusive, cooperative. How do you see a more diverse National Security establishment for the US empowering the US as an actor on the world stage? What does it mean when you go talk to India and Brazil and try to get them to support Ukraine, right? Or when you're talking about migration in Europe in a way that's, yes, control the issue, but also humane and actually standing by these ideals? How are you all
seeing that or have you seen that in dealing with foreign interlocutors in the policy-making conversation? Where does that kind of resonate and impact all of it?

**Nola Haynes:** One of my mentors, Undersecretary Bonnie Jenkins at the Department of State... When she goes out into the world and she's representing the United States, since when she, and when she's talking about very important issues around Arms Control treaties, things that keep us safe and our allies and partner countries safe, it's America keeping its promise. It's America saying, "We're not just saying that diversity is our um, is a strength. We're showing up, and you know, we actually mean it." So, in, and that's just one example, but where we are now, having to regain our um, our international credits, so to speak, diversity factors, because our allies and our enemies are watching, right? So, they're seeing what happens um, after George Floyd. They're seeing what's happening with the mass shootings. They're seeing what's happening with our extreme political polarization, right? And they're seeing, um, I talked to a few international friends recently, and there's, there's a really crass joke about, "Oh, you haven't gotten shot yet as a black person." And you have to stop and think, "This is, this is the perception. This is an international perception of America." And what we have to do better is to make sure that we are standing behind DEIA, right? Because you cannot show up to these faces at the negotiating table, uh, male, stale, and pale. I went to Harvard, so I just want to go ahead and put that out there. I didn't go to, um, so, but, but that matters, right? It matters who shows up to the negotiating table. And in my line of work, I see the change. I wouldn't be in the room, you know, if it weren't for this administration standing behind DEIA in a very real way. And we have to continue that. We have to continue the commitment to DEIA.

**Akbar Shahid Ahmed:** Experience, you know, just previously at the State Department, I wonder if this came up at all and with dealing with the audience and their curiosity or, you know, how you were able to explain America as a force that maybe wasn't like what they expected.

**Alyssa Ayres:** I had the privilege of serving in the State Department as a Council on Foreign Relations fellow in 2007 and 2008. So, as a non-partisan fellow under the leadership of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. And then I returned to the State Department to serve in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs under the leadership of Secretary Hillary Clinton. So, for me, the State Department was a place that had strong women as leaders, setting our foreign policy direction and speaking to the world about who we were as Americans, with a very strong emphasis on gender equality. I will also say when you sent us this question in advance, I wanted to be sure to say that I have really benefited in my career from wonderful mentors who were men, who invested in helping me advance to different stages in my career and saw something in me and encouraged me to go for opportunities, maybe even if I thought at the time I wasn't ready. So, I did want to say that because we've had State Department leadership that has presented a diverse view of the United States on
the world stage and brought that up to newspapers and television screens and phones all around the world, and I think that's been very beneficial for us as a country.

**Akbar Shahid Ahmed:** And I love that point. I think that that's something that gets missed. It's often, you know, the people who are maybe traditionally in the position of style, but are also aware that, as you were saying, on refractive systems, this makes better policy, right? Like, I want to bring in a different multiverse group. Um, I know we are wrapping up in a little bit, just for Q&A. I wanted to highlight a couple of things for the Q&A and invite you all if there's anything you wanted to say before we got into that. Just a few things of diversity and national security is actually measurable, right? We can actually look at what is happening and where people are in the hierarchy and where they're moving up. So I'd encourage folks who are interested in this, there's a great group called Inclusive America that does really good tracking on this. LC Wins is another one. And the administration has created these agency equity teams. So as we look at the U.S.'s future, honest issue and potentially why this goes with another administration that's less friendly, it's important to see what progress has been made here. I'll give you all just a quick, if there's anything you want to just say before Q&A.

**Alyssa Ayres:** Yeah, do you have something. I maybe talked a little bit too much, but I didn't get to something that I do think is important, and that's developing strong pipeline programs. And we do care a lot about this at the Elliott School. Since 2018, we've been convening a public service weekend in collaboration with the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at GW. This year, we're adding a third collaborator, GW Law, so the public service law component. We do that with PPIA, and it's designed to give people an introduction to what careers in public service, whether international affairs or more domestic public service, might look like. They can test drive that, do a policy memo, see what that might be like. We have some active partnerships. Our Research Institute focused on Asia has had an active partnership with Spelman College, again focused on Asia and thinking about and learning about Asia history, politics, and culture. Our Institute for Middle East Studies has created a partnership with Howard University focused on the Middle East and North Africa. So, we're always thinking about this. We're about to do one of our faculty members has a terrific project underway called the Generations Dialogue. This is Professor Jennifer Brinkerhoff, who just co-authored a book in collaboration with Aaron Williams, the first black director of the Peace Corps, and Taylor Jack, a international development leader. And the book is called "The Young Black Leader's Guide to Careers in International Affairs: What the Giants Want You to Know." And so, it's lessons and thoughts from giants who have succeeded in the field in a book form. So, people can pick this up and learn from their past successes. So, Professor Brinkerhoff has received a wonderful grant to convene students who might be interested in international affairs to learn from the giants. And that's an example of a kind of pipeline program that helps give young people thinking about careers in international affairs a chance to learn about successes, tips that might be helpful to their own careers and to ways of envisioning themselves in those roles down the line.
Akbar Shahid Ahmed: Those are amazing resources. Thank you for sharing those. Maybe I'll drop in and do a little state department Memo.

Alyssa Ayres: you are most welcome.

Akbar Shahid Ahmed: I'd like to invite our mic runners to kind of pass it out for Q&A if we have anyone. Yeah, I think we have a question.

Q&A:
"Thank you, good morning. My name is Cindy Serrano Roberts, and this question is directed to Under Secretary Cisneros. So, sir, I had an opportunity while I was on active duty to work with SAFDI, and I was a part of the Barrier Analysis Working Groups. And so, I led several efforts to combat barriers that stand in the way from Airmen and their families from really becoming their full self. And so, since retiring, I've had the opportunity to work with the United Nations. And last fall, the U.N. Human Rights Council held a session on the third, or the Commission on the Eradication of Discrimination in the United States. So, there were a lot of local, state, and federal agencies that sent delegations there. And so, I was wondering if DOD or Department of the Air Force was aware of that ongoing commission and if they plan on participating. Because, again, I've had the opportunity to work with the best and the wit, and I've led some of these efforts. Thank you."

"Well, first, thank you for your service. And, you know, again, diversity is something that's very important to the Department of Defense. We are integrating this into our defense strategy. I'm not aware of the biggest program that you just mentioned, but I would be willing to learn more about it to see what role we could play, if that's at all possible."

"Thank you. Um, I think we had a question in the front."

"Hello, uh, Max Blumenthal, The Gray Zone. My pronouns are Trump, Russia. Lockheed Martin has been identified as one of the most diverse employers in the country. And I was wondering if you knew, by any chance, how many products or weapons produced by Lockheed Martin diversity and equity have been dropped on the children of Palestine, Yemen, or Syria?"

"Thank you. Um, if anyone has that information, feel free to give it to The Gray Zone. But you can give me the scoop too. Um, I'd love to go to another question."

"Good morning. Thank you so much for this panel and great discussion. My name is Erin Brahmanjim. I work in the city of Los Angeles. I just wanted to ask a little bit more about the sub-national diplomacy conversation that you touched on, and specifically with respect to China. We've had the administration, leadership from the administration give kind of three recent addresses—Secretary Yellen, National Security Advisor Sullivan, and most recently,
Trade Representative Tai—talk about the importance of people-to-people connections. But I think one of the things that we are missing when we talk about subnational diplomacy is the pipelines for the impacts on local governments with respect to national decision-making, national security policy. So, in particular, I just highlight that before the pandemic, there were close to a hundred non-stop drug flights between China and LAX. And post-pandemic, we're at five. And that translates to roughly 1.2 million tourists a year. So, I wonder if you could speak a little bit about where you see some potential for establishing those types of connections through subnational diplomacy. Thank you."

"Maybe I'll take that. It sure, there are a lot of ways to try to get at this question, and certainly, the economic impact of the pandemic, the data you just shared with us illustrates how we're still not quite out of the downturn that the pandemic affected economically around the world. What is certainly the case is that we have seen, in let's say the last decade or so, the rise and strengthening of different kinds of networks. The city networks are quite robust, for example, the C-40 Cities Network that brings together, I think it's now up to 90-some cities around the world with a focus on climate. We see the growth of different networks focused on homeland security. Again, that's the Strong Cities Network is a good example. We see the strengthening of organizations that help make that connectivity part of what they do. It's inherent in the growth of these kinds of networks to bring people together and share best practices. So, it is certainly the case that we don't have we are not quite back to where we used to be in terms of travel, but the connectivity and the communication continues. And that has been something that's grown and I think then even strengthened by the acceptance and the routinization of virtual connectivity as a way to continue exchanging information and growing and developing relationships. But I take your point on tourism because that's there, there's no substitute for footfalls and hotel nights and going to the theater. And I just wonder, on that point, I mean, you know, you mentioned communities or cities, and your question certainly is about how a national approach or national decision-making maybe does not listen to one city but if that's 20 cities, 50 cities, right, being able to say, 'This is a priority to all of us,' how does that change the conversation?"

"Well, it certainly does. We saw when the Trump Administration decided to pull out of the Paris Agreement, what happened? Well, in the wake of that, a consortium of cities, of states, of NGOs, of businesses stepped up and said, 'We believe we can meet the U.S. commitments under Paris through the power of these voluntary groups coming together.' That, I thought, was a really good example of what it means to see collective voluntary action on an issue that organizations, individual levels of government, see as important. And that was something that happened entirely outside the federal level, right?"

"Another question. Good morning. Leanne Wheeler, make sure I'm speaking into the heart of it. Thank you for this discussion on this morning. I'm an Air Force vet, Desert Storm. I've been in defense contracting for decades now. Part of my early career work was around DEI. It was just DEI then. The 'A' wasn't there. And so, going back to your question as moderator and the
professor Haynes around the cultural discussion, I'm wondering over the last 40 years, the difference in the discussion with regard to culture and DEIA, or are we really just thinking you can parachute a Leanne Wheeler in, in the skin I'm in, and I'm going to make everything better in a manufacturing plant in Northeast America, right Massachusetts? So, I'm just wondering, has there been work or intentionality around how we transition from sort of a prescriptive state of DEI and how we actually do the subjective measure of culture change? Because you can, in fact, measure culture change. It doesn't look like bodies that look like mine in seats, but you know, better ways of managing it as a culture. Can any of you speak to what's happening in that regard? And I'm complete with that. Thank you."

"I'll jump in here. So, Dean Ayers mentioned networks, and you mentioned LC WINS. And we're sitting here at a Truman event. One of the features of this community is that there are different organizations from WCAPS, LC WINS, Diversity and National Security Network, Black Professionals in International Affairs. There are a lot of organizations that are stakeholders in a very interesting way. They really do cultivate talent, and pipelines are created, safe for political appointments, from everything from trying to help you get to DC if you're outside of the Beltway or having a clothing closet for folks who may not have the money to put on a nice suit to go to, you know, go to the interview. So, I really advocate very strongly for the pipeline organizations that exist too because I think that those organizations are making a really big difference, and I think we see a lot of that in this Administration. We see I bump into people all the time. I'm sure there are WCAPS members out there right now, you know. I'm sure there are LC WINS members out there right now, you know. And the pipeline is a really important part to that. I play several different roles as an academic on campus, and, you know, especially bright young women when I walk into the classroom and they're like, 'Okay, I see you.' I'm like, 'I see you too.' And I'm giving them information about different organizations that they can join. So, it's those pipeline organizations that are very important to making the culture shift, right? And Truman plays a huge role in making that culture shift, so that's one piece of it that I see is very effective in how that culture shift actually gets changed."

"And I'll just add from your point of how is this different from 40 years ago, I think there is so much more media attention. There's so much courage in people coming out of these agencies and saying, 'Here's how I was tokenized. Here's how I was silenced. Here's how I made a complaint and it went nowhere for years and years and years.' I think that's the shift, and I think the more of that that happens, the more people listen to those people rather than push them aside, that's what will make the difference more substantive."

"Yeah, I think one of the big differences, right, is, and I'll talk about this at the Department of Defense, but it's true, I think, with any non-profit, any company, you know, it has to be totally bought in by the organization. If you just set up an office and say, 'Okay, now we have somebody who's going to work on diversity,' you know, they could work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but if they're the only one who's focused on it, nothing is ever going to change,
right? So, I think with this Administration, you know, President Biden and his push on diversity and going into the Department of Defense, making it a priority and knowing that it is a part that contributes to our national security, we are totally bought in on the organization. And we are there working on our 2040 task force to get this done and to make that cultural change. But at any organization, it has to be completely bought in by the organization, or it's just not going to succeed. It's a great point. And to that point, you mentioned earlier, you know, the 'woke military' argument, which does keep coming up. I want you said, you know, you have to ignore it, but to some extent, you have to also engage with it, right? And I'm wondering what you see as the effective way to push back because you can't ignore it, right? These are all members of Congress. You were a member of Congress. They're going to keep doing hearings, and they're going to find someone, as they have, you know, with previous Armed Forces leaders, to come up and say, 'There is no issue with extremism in the ranks.' We've had -- we've seen that during this Administration, right? So, I wonder who you think in the administration or where that responsibility is to, like, loudly push back against that narrative."

Good morning, Aaron Brandon. I'm a retired Navy officer. Um, when I did my officer application, I'm primarily enlisted. Um, I had to interview three Navy officers and they get to ask you some fun questions. And the question I was asked was, um, "You're the Chief of Naval Operations for a day. What do you change in the Navy?" So I'm going to take that a little bit higher. First of all, thank you all for being here. It's a wonderful conversation. Um, you're POTUS for the day. You write an executive order. What do you write? What do you implement to address the diversity of national security issue that we've been talking about this morning?

I love this Truman, truly empowering the panel. You put it very scarcely. Um, I read it would be an incredible thing if POTUS for a day, we could institute much more expansive fellowship opportunities for students to have an education that allows them to lead to careers in foreign policy, national security, international economics, free of charge. That would, I think, that would be an incredible thing. Very difficult to do given present realities, but it's a vision dream, right?

The snacks crossing, "Oh, we're all going. Okay, I'm still thinking, what would President Haynes do? That's a really good question. It's a very good question. Well, this president has already beat me to an executive order, so, um, I would take that a step further. I would, I would focus more on the inclusivity and integration part of the executive order and spend a great deal of time, especially with the National Security structure. It's been a great deal of time of listening to different voices in the conversation and taking those recommendations and then implementing them and creating some sort of policy around that because I think in this work, there are people from multiple sides of the thing who feel like they're not being listened to,
and that's what's important in my personal opinion, to really get this right, to really have an inclusive environment across the entire National Security structure. You know, there'd be so many things I'd want to do. Do I have to limit it to this one, right? But I think, um, you know, I have a master's degree in urban education policy, right? And I understand, um, the opportunities that education can create because it did that for me. And I also understand, you know, through my education really is how, how hard it is for communities of color, can, you know, underserved communities to kind of raise above there and, and to really kind of move to the next level and be able to do something with their life and again, all the drive that they want but sometimes it doesn't work out. But I would, I don't know exactly what it is, but I would want to do something that would allow us to empower our communities, our underserved communities, our communities of color to break those bonds and to get out there and to really create some equality there, that so that they can achieve, um, and be successful. I mean, I know, you know, keep hitting my mic. My kids have a tremendous opportunity right now, more greater than I will ever than I could have ever imagined when I was there, Adrian. I have two two-nine-year-old twins, um, and I know the education that we're able to provide them is going to give them ample opportunity. I would want to do something that would be able to kind of create and level out that playing field to give kids from those communities that same opportunity that my children are going to have.

Journalists never got to be Protestant, so I'm not even going to try. Um, do we have a final question? Yes, I thank you, Hans Mack. I'm an Army veteran, and so Truman is solid as lead by example. It's one of the most diverse classes we've had this year, and a lot of that is based on a lot of work we've done over the years. We have a really big, robust initiative as well, too, on diversity. So we talked about earlier about measuring benchmarks and numbers, so I kind of look at it from a four-hour approach. So it's retention, recruitment. You can measure those by numbers, but then there are two pieces about resiliency and also responsibility because it's not enough just to have a voice at the table and count how many bodies you happen to see. It's also about the responsibility of the person, making the person who has responsibility for driving policy, decision-making responsibility, also resiliency. That includes a piece of about mentorship, growth, overcoming the barriers to growth and development, to be in those positions of responsibility as well, too. So I welcome your thoughts on how do you measure that? That's taking the numbers and peeling the onions back a little bit because when you guys should peel the onion back a little bit and see where they're at, we probably don't have the right people at the right levels.

Pretty interesting, and I'll just note, uh, you know, earlier this year, President Biden set up these agency Equity teams. Maybe that's something we could get into. Um, but that's a really interesting part of how this Administration is saying everywhere we are going to have designated teams. There's also an interagency working group on National Security Workforce. Maybe we can talk about some of those approaches they're doing to measure this, and if any of you has friends, it would be great to get more transparency about what that working group is doing. So is that a call for Scoops? Is that, yeah, always.
How agencies measure it? Or I just want a little clarity.

Um, sorry, I, I think you're right that that pipeline is important, right? Um, because we want to, we want to be able to have people grow and, uh, you know, we could find some mathematicians to create some metrics to kind of measure anything, and I'm sure we could do this as well. But I think, um, you know, there has to be, I think, as well, like an individual responsibility, uh, on everyone as a leader is like, how are you, what role are you going to play in mentoring those that are under you and helping them grow? Um, you know, I have a picture of, I'm a big baseball fan. I have a picture in my office, Jackie Robinson, with a quote that says, you know, "A life is only important on the impact it has on other lives." And, you know, if there's one thing I will kind of send away with you that I can share is that, you know, you're kind of moving up, right? You may be kind of, you know, just starting out in your career, but, you know, there's a student below you, right? As you move up, there's going to be somebody else. Believe it. What impact are you going to have on an individual to help upraise them and give them an opportunity as well? So I, I think that's something that we need to kind of take on, you know, as individuals to kind of go there and, and ensuring that we are doing our best to can, uh, to make this place diverse, equitable, and inclusive. I think you're hitting on, I know we're out of time, the difference between mentorship and sponsorship, and that sponsorship piece is very important to kind of close that gap in the middle from just starting out to people already there. So sponsorship is key to closing that gap. Thank you. Thank you all so much. You've been a great panel. Um, thank you for making our panelist president.

If everyone could please stay in their seats, there's going to be another great panel on chips, and please feel free to catch our panelists for further questions. Thank you.